

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

Internet Terror Recruitment and Tradecraft: How Can We Address an Evolving Tool While Protecting Free Speech?

May 26, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing & Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee hearing entitled “Internet Terror Recruitment and Tradecraft: How Can We Address an Evolving Tool While Protecting Free Speech?”:

“One of the most important messages this Committee has worked to communicate is that the concept of homeland security is more than just the sum of many working pieces. Yes, homeland security is about stopping terrorist attacks; yes, homeland security is about responding to disasters, both natural and man made.

But homeland security is also about giving the American public – our citizens – a sense of security and freeing them from fear. Terrorists want nothing more than to shatter our security and make us fearful. Their acts, by design, are intended to create fear to draw attention to their message, regardless of whether that message is hatred for a particular group of people, a government or policy.

And while we understand why terrorists use fear in this way, what we have struggled to understand is why individuals are drawn to participate in these kinds of acts. What leads an individual down the path from radical thought to violence? Many of our homeland security-related policies are directed towards prevention of terrorist acts and overcoming the fear created by those acts themselves; however, very little of our focus is upon another kind of fear: the fear generated by what we do not understand.

Because we are seeing a trend involving cases of individuals moved from radical thought to violent action – we have already heard just a few examples this morning – an important part of helping free us from fear is to strive to understand and, if possible, disrupt this process.

As a communication tool, the Internet is already used in many ways as an important piece of that process that we must work to understand. Because we are working to understand the recruitment and radicalization processes, it is equally important that we understand the uses to which individuals undergoing or encouraging this process put tools like the Internet.

However, freedom from fear also means that people should also not fear their government, and in particular should not fear the homeland security and law enforcement organizations that are working to provide their security. A person should also be free from

fear that their communications or free expression – both online and off – are not subject to improper law enforcement scrutiny.

This is why it is so important that we have conversations like the one we are having today. To free us from fear, we must develop our understanding of terrorist recruitment and radicalization and the tools used to facilitate that process. But we must also ensure that we are exploring these issues in a way that is protective of our rights to hold and express radical or unpopular ideas and privacy.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://homeland.house.gov>